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SUBJECT: DIAG PLENARY: "IT'S TIME FOR HONESTY"

KABUL 00001356 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ANGUS SIMMONS, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) A
ND (D)

11. (C) Summary: Reviewing the status of the DIAG process, UNAMA Deputy SRSG Alexander told the DIAG Steering Committee that the time has come for honesty. He said there has been little progress since the Parliamentary elections last September, and that until the GOA shows political commitment at the highest level) including countering the opposition of powerful local leaders) the process will not move forward. GOA Ministers at the meeting replied with their own set of objections, saying they feel closed out of the planning process and that coordination with the international community is lacking. While the meeting was a valuable airing of views, it also showed how much work remains to be done. End summary.

12. (C) At the March 26 DIAG Steering Committee meeting, chaired by Second Vice President Khalili, UNAMA Deputy SRSG Alexander said there has been little progress since the September elections. He pressed the GOA to produce lists of IAGs for the five initial provinces, and emphasized that the lists needed to be put together on the basis of facts, not political lobbying. He added that once the lists have been produced they will have to receive support at the political level. Alexander mentioned in particular two prominent political figures with government appointments, Energy Minister Ismael Khan and Military Chief of Staff Abdul Rashid Dostum. So long as people like these high up in the GOA oppose the DIAG process, he said,

it cannot succeed. &If we talk openly,8 Alexander said, &they cannot oppose us. But if we pretend that these obstacles don,t exist, they will.8

¶3. (C) Japanese Charge Kato (Japan is the lead DIAG nation) also announced that Japan would host a DIAG Conference in Tokyo in July, and hoped President Karzai would be attending. Kato said it would be important to have significant DIAG successes leading up to the Tokyo Conference to maintain momentum and that Japan was looking to make a substantial budget pledge toward DIAG at that time.

¶4. (C) More generally, drawing on the discussion at the DIAG Principals, meeting held immediately before the Steering Committee meeting, Alexander requested that the GOA raise the political profile of the DIAG process. For example, he noted the international community,s concern that the workshop for governors of the five initial provinces, scheduled for March 26, had been canceled because the governors had intended to send second or third-line staff rather than attending themselves. (Note: In fact, haphazard conference planning and failure to adequately vet the date set immediately after the Nowruz holiday may have been at fault. End note.) Alexander pointed out that unless governors fully understand that the GOA considers DIAG a top priority, they will not make the effort needed to bring it about.

GOA Perspective

¶5. (C) In the same spirit of open discussion,

KABUL 00001356 002.4 OF 003

Defense Minister Wardak raised several points that he said had been discussed in the internal GOA meeting prior to the Steering Committee session. He said the GOA wants more visibility into planning and budgets for the DIAG process. In particular, he said, it would like the opportunity to evaluate plans at an early stage rather than being presented with completely developed proposals from the international staff and asked for their approval. Wardak also requested that ANBP make funds available to governors for workshops on DIAG. When ANBP representative Peter Babbington responded that funds are already being given for this purpose, the GOA Ministers said they had not been informed of it.

¶6. (C) Wardak also claimed that international efforts to publicize the program have been deficient and expensive) he suggested that the GOA take on the publicity effort rather than leaving it to contractors. He said that this would be an excellent way to build capacity within the GOA. Babbington replied that ministry public affairs offices have for the past six months been invited to attend Joint Secretariat meetings to plan publicity efforts, but they have chosen not to participate.

¶7. (C) Minister Wardak also raised the case of the recent explosion at Jebel As-Suraj of 100 tons ordnance collected through DDR, in which two civilians were killed and 74 Afghans (16 ANA soldiers and 58 civilians) were injured. He said the GOA investigation had determined that the incident was due to negligence rather than sabotage. He noted, however, that the event showed a lack of coordination between the ANBP, the ANA, and Halo Trust (the implementing NGO). Babbington responded that the depot was inside an ANA base, rather than a more isolated location, at the insistence of the ANA itself, and that the remaining explosives at Jebel

As-Suraj have now been transported to the main destruction site at Khairabad. He said that ANBP was looking into the issue of compensation for the victims.

¶8. (C) In the course of a general discussion, commentators from the Afghan side noted that while DIAG is institutionally strong (the committee, chaired by the Second Vice President, includes Minister or Deputy Minister-level representation from relevant GOA ministries), it lacks monitoring and evaluation capability. Investigators will be required for cases of non-compliance with disbandment orders, which will require more budget resources, one attendee noted.

Comment

¶9. (C) This surprisingly frank discussion shows the frustration with the present state of the DIAG process on the part of both the international community and the Afghan participants. In our pre-meeting, internal discussion on the international side focused on the lack of commitment on the part of the GOA and the problems of corruption and non-cooperation DIAG program implementers are facing in the provinces. In the Steering Committee meeting, the GOA side argued that it has been closed out of the process at the planning level and that serious

KABUL 00001356 003.2 OF 003

disconnects remain among the various participants. Deputy SRS Alexander's remarks about Ismael Khan and General Dostum were interesting, and among the frankest ever spoken in a DIAG plenary meeting. Without GOA pressure and supportive political negotiations by the highest level with power brokers like these, the DIAG process will only achieve Potemkin victories.

¶10. (C) Meanwhile Japan, as the lead DIAG nation, is clearly anxious to see progress, and wants to have something to show for GOA and international community efforts before it goes to the expense of hosting a major conference in Tokyo. End comment.

NORLAND